

Dear Friends

Welcome to our summer newsletter, in which we provide an update on the river's recovery, set out plans for next season's volunteering events and the Kneller Gardens Open Day, and announce new funding initiatives for river improvements.

Crane Pollution Recovery and the Court Case

The river is continuing to show steady signs of recovery from the latest major pollution event in October 2013. Small fish fry can be seen throughout the river and there have also been sightings of eleven different fish species – minnows, stickleback, stone loach, and bullhead; and roach, chub, pike, bleak, dace, perch and gudgeon. Some one and two year old fish have appeared – possibly from the Yeading Brook upstream – but the river remains severely under-populated with very few mature fish and no eels seen as yet. In addition, there have been a few sightings of kingfishers but no evidence of breeding pairs this summer.

Thames Water appeared at Isleworth Crown Court on 27th June 2014 and was found guilty of negligence in relation to the October 2011 pollution incident, which first wiped out the aquatic life of the river, and fined £70,000 plus costs. FORCE put out a statement expressing our disappointment at the size of this fine (equivalent to around 5 hours profit for the company) and expressing hope that lessons would be learned from the pollution. Unfortunately, on 2nd July there was yet another Thames Water incident, when a sewer blockage polluted the lower Crane and Whitton Brook in St Margarets.

We are currently organising a public meeting for the autumn, with representation from Thames Water and the Environment Agency, to discuss the environmental value of the River Crane and how this can be better protected in the future.

Village Green – Craneford East Field

Richmond Council regulatory committee decided, on 23rd July, to accept the recommendation of the Inspector that the Craneford East (College) Field site would not be designated as a village green. We accepted this decision in our address to this committee. We also noted that our application had revealed a continuous public use of the field for around 50 years and written statements from over fifty families as to their long term use. We also noted the clear commitment from the College that, at the time of land transfer in the 1990's, this field would remain with full public access. This will be important evidence if future plans for this site propose restrictions to public use.



Re-organisation of FORCE

Our tenth anniversary in 2013 was also an opportunity to review our approach and objectives and the process has continued this year. As a result we are appointing group leaders and support teams in seven key work areas – environment, volunteering, community, planning, education, membership and marketing – and strategies are being developed to support each of these.

We have identified leads for six of the areas from among the Trustees and are currently looking for a lead for the marketing portfolio. We welcome interest from our membership in taking on this role and/or providing support to this or other areas. If you are interested (or merely intrigued) then please drop us a line and we will be happy to talk about how it might work in practice.

We are also seeking a Treasurer to take over from Anna Smyk in 2015. Training will be given, and Anna will provide a complete handover.

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The Outdoor Classroom

Over the last few months FORCE trustees have been working to engage young people in the open spaces along the river. Through a grant from Heathrow Communities Funding we have been working with 3 local schools and Crane Park Family Centre visiting Crane Park to carry out a number of activities related to the primary school curriculum. Some of the work produced by children will be presented at the Dog Show on 14th September. We will continue the partnership with the Hounslow schools into the new academic year.

FORCE trustees presented a series of workshops at the London Schools Sustainability Conference in May. This conference, aimed at teachers, introduced the concept of teaching the curriculum in local green spaces. A follow up session for teachers is planned in the Outdoor Classroom in Crane Park on 17th September from 4-6pm. Further details are available by emailing info@force.org.uk



We have also been working in partnership with TCV on a midweek adult learning project which has seen a well-attended series of events including sessions on managing wetland habitats, stag beetles, butterfly identification, bird identification and a bat walk. We hope that we shall be successful with a funding bid to Richmond Council which will allow us to continue these sessions over the next few months. Details will be made available on the website.



Wetland Creation Projects

We are supporting Richmond Council in projects to restore and improve the environmental value of the river at Mill Road and Willow Way in Crane Park. Works will include the creation of new marginal habitat, the removal of silt from the backwater channel and the construction of a kingfisher nesting bank. Major works are likely to start next winter and be partly implemented by volunteers working with TCV.

A Carved Owl in Kneller Gardens

The chain saw sculptor Paul Sivell, who has produced all our carved benches, was in Kneller Gardens in July to carve a magnificent owl from the stump of a diseased maple.

Balsam Bash

You may have seen the large amounts of himalayan balsam along the river corridor this year – probably due to the winter floods extending the active seed bank. FORCE has helped co-ordinate a dozen groups in removing the balsam and planting native species. The benefits can be seen on the island at Hospital Bridge Road, where there are more reeds than ever before and purple loosestrife appears for the first time.

Public Use Surveys

The latest of our twice annual surveys took place in July – many thanks to all who helped collect and analyse these data. Over 1000 people were recorded and more than ever before continued their journey along the Crane corridor. The figures showed a small reduction in public use of the Meadway entrance to Crane Park, maybe due to the unsettled weather, and the numbers recorded at the Dragonfly Terrace reduced by over 30 per cent. This may be partly weather related and partly a response to the nearby fatal stabbing in May.

If you are interested in helping these surveys for an hour or more please contact us. We provide full instructions and support and would very much welcome your participation.

Pevensey Road Open Space

The cycle Path connecting Pevensey Road Open Space and de Brome Fields with Hanworth Park has been completed and appears to be well used. This path is an extension of the Crane Park cycle path and a welcome addition to the off road cycle path.

Over the last few months we have been working with TCV to promote the Green Gym at Pevensey Road. This weekly project will continue for the next year and to date work has included clearance of Himalayan balsam and path creation along the river path. Other activities are planned over the next few months

Volunteer Days

Our new season of volunteer days is included with this newsletter. We are also working with partner organisations, and they are doing a lot more work during the week. TCV in particular are running a series of events in the lower Crane in both Hounslow and Richmond www.tcv.org.uk/london As with all our events no experience is necessary and you can just turn up on the day.

Annual Open Day

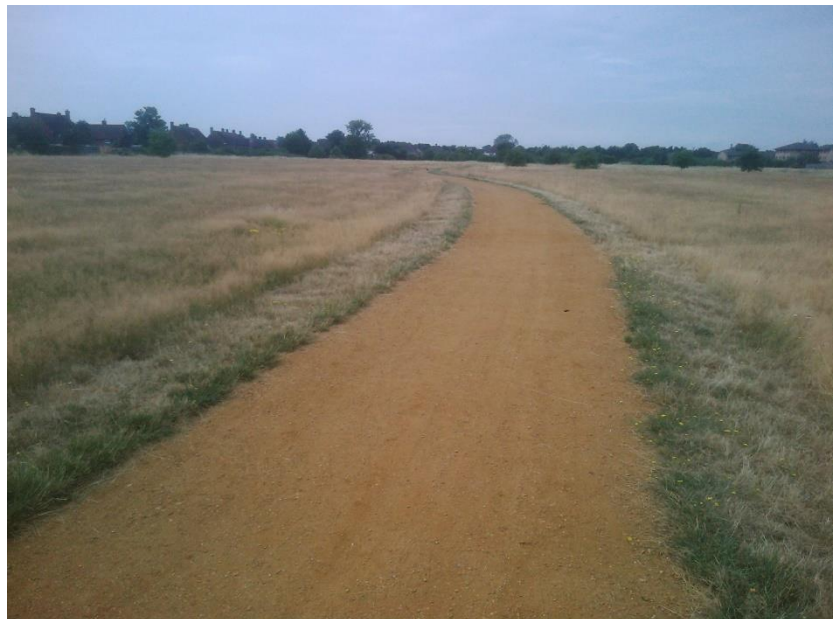
The Annual Kneller Gardens Dog Show will be held on Sunday 14th September, starting at 1pm. FORCE will be there with our information boards and leaflets and we will hold our annual duck race at the end of the dog show. We have decided though not to have a full scale open day this year and we will re-visit this in 2015 subject to the views of members and the general public.

We look forward to seeing you at one or more of our events over the next few months

Regards,



Rob Gray, Chair of FORCE



FORCE Volunteer Days and Activity Programme

Date	Location	Activities
2014		
12 th October	Twickenham Rifle Club and Craneford Field West, Triangle (Meet at the Rifle Club)	General maintenance and path creation
9 th November	Crane Park and Mill Road (Meet at Mill Road entrance to Crane Park)	Hedge laying, path clearance and river clean up plus work on new open space
14 th December	Crane Park Island up to Crane Park outdoor classroom (Hanworth Rd) (Meet at the Shot Tower)	Willow pollarding + maintenance and improvement of the outdoor classroom
2015		
11 th January	Mereway Nature Park to Meadway Orchard ** Child friendly day ** (Meet at the outdoor classroom, Mereway Nature Park)	Path clearance and wood chipping of Mereway Nature Park and the Meadway Orchard plus care for the horse chestnuts by the depot and river clearance
10 th February	Pevensey Road and Little Park (Meet at the Pevensey Road entrance to the park)	Maintenance of fruit trees, support for TCV Green Gym and wetland marginal planting
8 th March	Crane Park Butts Farm (Meet at the Dragonfly Terrace)	Tasks to be identified
14 th April	To be decided in December	Dependent on progress during the first three months, and developments at Mill Road and Willow Way
10 th May	As above	As above
14 th June	Catchment wide balsam bash	Balsam removal and planting along lower Crane + end of season BBQ

*Volunteer events start at 10-30am; join us for an hour or the whole day. Hot drinks are provided but bring a packed lunch if staying the day. Please wear stout shoes or boots and old clothes.

There will also be TCV volunteering events on the first and third Wednesday of each month until March 2015, to deliver the wetland projects at Mill Rd, Pevensey and Donkey Wood. TCV are also running a weekly Green Gym every Monday from 11am to 2pm in Pevensey Nature Reserve More information on these and all the borough's events can be found at <http://www.swlen.org.uk/events-calendar/view>